

To,
Instructional Quality Commission,
History-Social Science SMC
1430 N Street, Suite 3207
Sacramento, CA 95814
e-mail: hssframework@cde.ca.gov.

Feb 26, 2016

RE: History and Social studies framework: Problems in singling out Hinduism for negative portrayal.

I have been writing to IQC starting 2014 when I brought attention to the disparity in treatment of Hinduism and Indian Civilization in comparison with the other religions and cultures, especially the Abrahamic religions. I am glad that the IQC has conceded that the framework is euro-centric, however I remain disappointed at the lack of necessary effort to fix the problems, especially the ones we have brought to the attention of IQC through the testimony from the community including many school children, and a written letter campaign.

The draft under public review presently still has many of problems we have already brought to your attention. Specifically, it singles out Hinduism for an absurd and negative portrayal from the perspective of those that seek to vilify her, while the Abrahamic religions, specifically Christianity, Islam and Judaism, continue to be portrayed from the perspective of practitioners with generous and complimentary interpretations. This is wrong, unfair and against the very spirit of education. It is in violation of multiple codes and guidelines established by the great state of California. It is also un-American in its spirit of meanness and unfairness.

Members of IQC told us that they want specific edits, and we provided those in October. Members of IQC in conversations agreed that there is lot of ignorance about Hinduism and hence I provided an educational piece to add context and relevance to the Indian social structure. **Yet I still do not see any effort by IQC to bring a Hindu perspective and context to the Indian social structure, and for this I fault IQC.** I also fault IQC for continuing to present Hindu theology in the proposed framework from the perspective of those that seek to vilify Hinduism.

I feel it is pointless to give more specific edits when what we have already provided is not taken seriously enough. I feel strongly that IQC needs to adopt Hindu input in its entirety as relates to Hindu Theology and Social structure.

I could give specific edits pointing out the hypocrisy, barbarism, lack of humanity and commonsense in the practices of Abrahamic religions and insist those are added in the framework **to bring balance** if Hinduism continues to be presented from the perspective of those that seek to vilify her. However, doing so is against my respect for Hinduism which has taught me to respect diversity of views as an integral part of the naturally diverse expression of the ONE supreme divine truth. Also doing so will not help the children of California develop an outlook of respect for other cultures. Yet if Hinduism continues to be singled out for negative portrayal as it is, Hindus of California shall have to find a way to draw parallels that are understood, or educate their children outside the public school system. The wrong needs to end.

It is imperative that IQC adopt Hindu perspective in its entirety on portrayal of Hindu theology and the Indian social structure which has been wrongly portrayed as an evil by the Orientalist euro-centric colonialist revisionist history writers.

Even if we accept IQC co-chair Bill Honig's comment at face value indicating that the Indian social structure is part of history and hence needs to be portrayed, **we do not understand why the Indian social structure continues to be portrayed exclusively from the Orientalist/Euro-Centric/Hindu phobic Christian missionary perspective. As if to add insult to injury IQC added lines 883-895 in chapter 10, sixth grade portion that is inflammatory and an example of singling out India for an exclusively euro-centric portrayal, negative portrayal, something we have been complaining about. Those lines are objectionable at many levels and simply need to be removed in the interest of fairness. No other major culture is presented solely from the perspective of its critics.**

It is because the Indian social structure is part of history that it needs to be presented for what it is. I refer you to my submission of Oct 16, 2015, Attachment - I. Write-up explaining Hindu social structure from a Hindu perspective in the context of present California society. I urge the IQC to attempt to bring in points from the write-up on the social structure to add context and Hindu perspective at 6th grade level. Presenting Indian social structure exclusively from the perspective of those that want to portray Hindus as uncultured/uncivilized heathens is simply unacceptable.

The Co-chair has made comments indicating that through history all social structures were of a kind where those with power had wealth and used both to retain control over others. **How then does he explain that a Hindu Brahmana, the most respected in Hindu society is also often the poorest with close to nothing as material possession?** This is unique about Indian society. Even a king respects the pauper, nay, the beggar who literally begs for his food. Isn't this the dream of intellectuals, where ideas are respected for what they are, and not for the size of bankroll backing them? Hindus had a great culture of intellectual debates where ideas were promoted. Hindus did not feel threatened to burn intellectuals at the stake because science and ideas threaten Abrahamic dogma. **One of the unique features and beauty of Hinduism is that there is no dogma in Hinduism. Hindu social structure was unique in that the four pillar powers of society, i.e. knowledge, government authority, wealth and labor were kept distributed among four different classes of society. These unique and very significant points need to be mentioned in the framework.**

Indian social structure ensured that the problem we face, even in our present day society – of one group usurping it all - is mitigated. Each jati was self-organizing and had representation even in a monarchy. This shows that Indian society had components of democracy through representation and the Hindu concept of dharma led to a society we today might refer to as libertarian, where different groups were allowed freedom to make their own laws and customs.

Why is the real learning opportunity from the Hindu social structure being swept under the rug?

The questions I am struggling to answer are questions IQC needs to take a hard look at as well:

1. Who does it help when an Orientalist/Euro-centric/Abrahamic supremacist propaganda is thrust upon the children of a multi-cultural state like California?

2. Why would California want to take away the opportunity for its children to learn from real history and other cultures?
3. Is CDE and IQC willing to accept the changing face of California or is the objective to create a generation of people who are made to glorify Euro-Abrahamic culture and disassociate from their native heritage?

I am hopeful that the spirit of justice and the spirit of education shall prevail and IQC and CDE shall recognize the grave failings the present framework has with respect to Indian civilization and Hinduism which is almost 1/5th of humanity today and more so in ancient history.

The present framework does not do enough to promote the spirit of fairness and education. Hindus are people too, and Hindu children of California deserve the same rights as those extended to civilized children of California.

Sincerely,

Tushar Pandya

Californiahindus.org